



# Dale Rhoton

30 January 1938 – 31 May 2026



Dale Rhoton, who co-founded Operation Mobilisation (OM), was born in 1938 in Kansas City, Missouri, USA. His older brother, Wilson, led him to faith in Christ when he was 17 years old. The family moved to Biloxi, Mississippi, where Dale attended a youth group at a Christian and Missionary Alliance church. Its pastor was a guiding influence as Dale grew in his faith.

It was at Maryville College in Tennessee that Dale met fellow students George Verwer and Walter Borchard. George was baptised by Dale, whom he considered a spiritual mentor. In 1957, the three young men made their first mission trip to Mexico, to distribute Christian literature in their summer break. They returned with an empty van and hearts full of passion to reach others with the love of Jesus. The outreach laid the foundation for what would become OM.

The friends transferred to Christian colleges around Chicago, Illinois: George went to Moody Bible Institute while Walter and Dale enrolled at nearby Wheaton. They were active in student prayer meetings, raising funds and mobilising teams for mission trips. Dale completed his bachelor's degree and an MA in New Testament studies, with a view to working in Bible translation.

George Verwer spoke to Dale about the 33 million Muslims in Türkiye with no access to the Bible – might he consider starting outreach there? Dale prayed about it and decided to go; as did another Wheaton graduate, Roger Malstead, in early 1961. Dale's fiancée, Elaine Thomas, joined the pioneering team and they were married that December.

In 1964, Dale was greatly impacted by meeting Richard Wurmbbrand, who had been imprisoned for his faith in Communist-controlled Romania.

Dale established OM's Greater Europe ministry, which found creative ways to send Bibles and Christian literature to the growing Church behind the 'Iron Curtain' of the former Soviet Union. Building connections with like-minded churches and mission agencies was a gift of Dale's, and was crucial for resourcing such an endeavour.

Dale concentrated on OM's Ship Ministry for more than four decades. He served at sea as the director of OM's second ship, *Doulos*, from 1979 to 1981, then his family moved to the ships' administrative base in Germany. Dale became associate director, then managing director from 1984 to 1999. Returning to live in the United States in their sixties, Dale and Elaine developed networks to partner with OM's Ship Ministry.

Dale travelled widely to inspire and connect people to support OM's work. He encouraged emerging leaders and exemplified a committed prayer life. His pastoral heart and diligence were an ideal counterbalance to the more outgoing personality and frenetic pace of George Verwer. Two college students who committed their lives to global mission have been used powerfully by God for the furtherance of the gospel and the mobilising of hundreds of thousands of Christian workers.

## Books written by Dale Rhoton

*Christian Strategy*, Midwest Christian Publishers, 1963.

*Can We Know?* CLC, 1972.

*The Logic of Faith*, Send the Light, 1978.

'God's Faithfulness' – chapter in *Global Passion: Marking George Verwer's Contribution to World Missions*, Authentic Lifestyle, 2003.

*How Much for the Man?* GS Books, 2018.